

## CHAPTER 5

TACTICAL, OPERATIONAL, AND STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE  
PREPARATION OF THE BATTLEFIELD

*Ironically, our tactical successes did not prevent our strategic failure and North Vietnam's tactical failures did not prevent their strategic success. . . . Our failure as military professional to judge the true nature of the Vietnam war had a profound effect. It resulted in confusion throughout the national security establishment over tactics, grand tactics, and strategy. . . .*

—Harry G. Summers, 1982

The basic IPB process remains the same, regardless of the level of war at which it is conducted. Some considerations for the application of IPB doctrine at different levels are discussed in this chapter.

The examples given are not all-inclusive. A complete list would be impossible to present due to the dramatic variance of the situations that the US Army might conduct operations within. IPB at the operational and strategic levels will usually be “custom built” and tailored for each METT-T situation. However, the basic process of IPB will always remain the same.

### Define the Battlefield Environment

Regardless of the level of execution, the AO is almost always confined to the geographical boundaries specified on the operations overlay given from higher headquarters. In terms of time, it is always for the duration of the operations specified in the OPORD.

However, the nature of the AI and the types of activity with which a command is concerned vary significantly according to the level of war at which IPB is conducted. Establishing an AI that exceeds the limits of the AO and the command's battle space allows the command to anticipate significant developments. Following are considerations for establishing the AI at various levels.

#### Tactical:

- The AI is almost always confined to the physical location and AAs of threat units that have the time and mobility to enter the AO.
- Significant characteristics of the battlefield during war are usually limited to—
  - Influence of the terrain and weather on military operations.
  - Ability of the local infrastructure to support operations.
  - Environmental health hazards.
  - Employment of threat combat forces.
  - Location of noncombatant populations.
  - Refugee flows.
  - SOFAs.
  - ROE and other restraints and constraints on military operations.

- As tactical units operate in operations other than war, the characteristics they are interested in usually expand to include items such as—
  - Press coverage and threat propaganda.
  - Sympathies and reactions of local population and organizations to friendly operations.
  - Local economy, including “black markets.”
  - Local legal system.
  - Unofficial organizations, including clans and tribes.
  - Local government, including unofficial parties, meeting sites, activities, contentious issues, and so forth.
  - Para-military organizations and police forces.
  - Governmental and nongovernmental organizations that may interact with the friendly force during execution of the mission.

**Operational:**

At the operational level the AI expands to include items such as—

- Location of threat CSS units.
- Local infrastructure required to support threat resupply operations.

The types of activity of concern during military operations at the operational level generally include—

- Potential effects of third-nation involvement.
- Press coverage and threat propaganda.
- Sympathies and reactions of regional population and organizations.
- Regional economies.
- Regional legal systems.

**Strategic:**

At the strategic level the AI expands to include the entire world. Significant characteristics expand to include—

- World opinion and international law.
- US public support.
- Support base and political objectives of the threat government.
- Threat, HN, and coalition partner national economies and legal systems.

**Describe the Battlefield's Effects**

**Tactical:**

During war, terrain considerations are usually confined to identifying terrain objectives, specific AAs, and infiltration lanes that support attacks, and terrain that supports defense.

Weather considerations are usually confined to the effects of weather upon personnel, weapons systems, force mobility, and tactical military operations.

During operations other than war, other characteristics of the battlefield gain in importance. Characteristics of the battlefield are always analyzed in terms of their effect upon threat and friendly COAs. The following are some examples:

- “The Carter-Torrijos Treaty does not allow us to conduct the operation being considered in the areas marked in red.”
- “The threat cannot establish any defense larger than company size for 3 weeks because the militia will be harvesting.”
- “A surprise attack on objective BUTKUS will probably convince the people in the surrounding village that the insurgent propaganda is correct and the stated US position is a lie. The people will support an attack only if we give reasonable opportunity for noncombatants to evacuate.”

### **Operational:**

Terrain analysis at the operational level focuses on the general effects of terrain on operations within the battlefield framework. At this level it incorporates such items as—

- Ability of large pieces of terrain to support the combat operations of large units in the AO and AI.
  - Large forests generally inhibit mounted movement and favor the employment of dismounted forces. Forests complicate the employment of intelligence-gathering assets, communications, and coordination between adjacent forces.
  - Open and gentle rolling terrain favors the employment of mounted forces.
  - Swamps and other wetlands limit mounted movement to road networks and hamper dismounted, off-road movement. These areas tend to be easily dominated by air units.
  - Deserts hamper large-scale or long movements. Although terrain within the desert may vary greatly, deserts are characterized by a lack of natural concealment, lack of cover, lack of fresh water, and difficulties with LOCs.
  - Mountainous terrain normally restricts operations to valley areas and passes. Lateral LOCs are generally restricted, making it difficult to move reserves or shift main efforts.
- Transportation networks (for example, road, rail, air, sea) and zones of entry into and through the AO and AI.
- Ability of transportation networks to support the movement of forces and provide logistical support to large unit operations in various parts of the AO and AI.

Weather analysis at this level usually addresses the seasonal climatic effects on the combat, CS, and CSS operations of large units.

Other significant characteristics of the battlefield gain importance at the operational level. Express their influence in terms of their effect on threat and friendly COAs. Examples are—

- “The Kuntz tribe will resist any attempt to establish military lines of operation through their land. They do not have the military means to significantly interfere with our

lines, but two international treaties make operations in this region inadvisable for either side.”

- “The Neroth TruffleWald supplies 100 percent of the truffles for both the Good Duchy of Fenwick and the Evil Emirate of Vulgaria. The truffle harvest from this region is valued so highly by both countries that off-road maneuver will not be tolerated. Except for the paved roads, it is considered SEVERELY RESTRICTED terrain.”

### Strategic:

At strategic levels the battlefield is described in terms of geography and climate rather than terrain and weather. Focus on the effects of major terrain features and weather patterns. How do mountain ranges, flood plains, and tracts of forest within the theater influence operations and available COAs?

Other characteristics of the battlefield take on an increased importance at the strategic level. For example, the industrial and technological capabilities of a nation or region will influence the type of military force it fields. Similar factors may influence the ability of a nation to endure a protracted conflict without outside assistance. Political and economic factors may be the dominant factors influencing threat COAs. Always express the evaluation of their effects in terms of operations and COAs. For example—

- “The threat’s state of technological development makes him dependent on outside sources for sophisticated military equipment.”
- “World opinion prevents us from pursuing the enemy across the border.”
- “The enemy can prosecute the war only as long as the oil shipments continue from the west. Any significant interdiction of the oil flow will render the enemy immobile at the strategic and operational levels.”
- “At the moment, popular support for the enemy government is very precarious. However, friendly advances farther into the vital northern region will rally the people around the war effort. This would probably enable the enemy to mobilize more strategic reserves.”
- “The Montreal Treaty, designed to maintain the regional balance of power, forbids us to conduct any operation without the consent of all six nations.”
- “The probability of Chinese intervention increases as we approach the Yalu River.”
- “The sea LOCs best support opening the second front in northern France. However, the second front could still be well supplied through southern France, and marginally well through Yugoslavia.”
- “The winter climate in this region is too severe for an army of southern Europe to endure in the field. Napoleon must either destroy the Russian army before winter, or conduct a strategic withdrawal.”

## Evaluate the Threat

### Tactical:

This usually involves analysis and evaluation of the OB factors (composition, disposition, strength, tactics, training status) for threat units at the tactical level. As a result of studying the threat OB factors, the analyst produces threat models. Tactical examples are—

- “Layout and defensive measures for the typical insurgent base camp.”

- “Standard demonstration tactics for the Students Yearning for a Free Lilliput.”
- “Typical security echelon for a mechanized infantry division in the defense.”
- “Surveillance procedures that the People’s Democratic Army uses prior to a terrorist attack.”
- “Standard narco-terrorist security measures for the protection of cocaine-producing laboratories.”

### **Operational:**

Analysis of the OB factors at this level should include weapons of mass destruction and the threat’s doctrine for operational command and control. This includes his doctrine for determining operational missions and objectives and the TTP associated with gaining nuclear or chemical release authority. Express vulnerabilities and HVTs in terms of the threat’s centers of gravity.

Evaluate all military forces available. Include paramilitary forces and special operations forces that operate in the communications zone as well as forces operating on the battlefield.

Some examples of threat models at the operational level are—

- “Normal sequence of events for the conduct of a national offensive by the insurgents.”
- “Typical enemy campaign plan for an operational delay.”
- “Theater support structure for enemy logistics.”
- “Procedures that regional paramilitary forces could use to interfere with noncombatant evacuation.”
- “Standard exploitation and pursuit procedures employed by enemy tank armies.”

### **Strategic:**

OB analysis at this level includes considerations such as—

- Relationship of the military to the government. Who sets national and theater objectives? How?
- Nonmilitary methods of exerting power and influence.
- National will and morale.
- Ability to field, train, and maintain large military forces.

Threat capabilities and models depicting them take a strategic view of operations and COAs. Examples of threat models at the strategic level are—

- “Possible forms of intervention by third-party countries.”
- “Normal timetables for the enemy mobilization and train-up of corps-size units.”
- “Techniques for transporting large volumes of narcotics through source, intermediate, and destination countries.”
- “Typical movement rates when shifting strategic reserves between theaters.”

### Determine Threat Courses of Action

To determine a threat COA at any level, the analyst must first identify the threat's likely objectives, then identify the various threat models that will accomplish the objectives under the specific METT-T conditions under consideration.

#### Tactical:

Some examples of threat COA models at the tactical level are—

- “Most likely response of 8th Company (Atlantica) upon a treaty violation by 3d Troop (Pacífico).”
- “Likely infiltration lanes, ambush sites, and exfiltration lanes for an insurgent attack against Thursday's convoy.”
- “How the 35th Motorized Rifle Regiment would defend Mulvihill Pass using a reverse slope defense.”

#### Operational:

COA models at the operational level focus on LOCs, lines of operation, phasing of operations, operational objectives, the movement and employment of large forces, and so forth. Express HVTs in terms of centers of gravity and operational targets that expose centers of gravity to destruction.

Some examples of threat COA models at the operational level are—

- “Most likely COAs of the six warring factions upon the introduction of US peace-enforcement troops.”
- “Probable LOCs if the enemy attacks in the northern half of the theater.”
- “COA 3: The rival warlords are unable to come to an agreement and cannot generate enough force to effectively oppose the entry of US Forces. In this case, they do not interfere with US operations, and might even facilitate the relief efforts, hoping for a speedy withdrawal of US Forces once the mission is complete. Once US Forces have withdrawn, it is back to business as usual.”
- “General forecast of guerrilla attacks assuming that Route 88 is successfully interdicted for the next 3 months.”
- “COA 1: Put the army boundary along the MUSTANG MOUNTAINS and commit 2d Army with four divisions against the MONS TONITRUS sector, and 3d Army with five divisions against the TIR YSGITHER sector.”
- “The enemy's operational center of gravity is his ability to quickly shift the two reserve corps to reinforce any one of the three front-line armies. The key to his center of gravity is the rail-transportation network centered in the RISSE-MESS-SCHMID area.”

#### Strategic:

Threat COA models at the strategic level consider the entire resources of the threat. Include nonmilitary methods of power projection and influence. Identify theaters of main effort and the major forces committed to each. Depict national as well as strategic and theater objectives.

Following are some examples of situation templates at the strategic level:

- “The three best options for the Trojans if presented with a war on two fronts.”

- “The directions that Chairman Cormier will probably issue to his military council, given the current political situation.”
- “Military resources that the Spartans will probably commit to pacify the population within the occupied territories.”
- “COA 1: The main effort is the Atlantic theater. The allies will attempt to open a second front as soon as possible while conducting a strategic defense in the Pacific.”
- “Probable reactions of Metropolania and Urbano to US operations in support of insurgency within Forgotonia.”
- “Military options available to Garraland that might break the blockade and embargo.”
- “COA 3: Because of political and economic ties, as well as the availability of resources, the Americans and British will split responsibility for the Pacific theater. The most likely boundary is shown on sketch C.”
- “The terrorist organization’s strategic center of gravity is their ability to use the area along the border as a sanctuary. The lack of cooperation between the two countries in policing their common border is the key to the center of gravity.”